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# THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

## TABLE DECORATION.

BY LAURA B. STARR.

T would seem that the height of absurdity in table decoration had been reached, when in the strain for new effects an English decorator had used a white satin tablecloth at a Derby dinner, while at a tea given at the same time cloths of frilled yellow pongee were used. From these and other similar traps, snares, pitfalls and devices of the arch enemy, we may well pray to be delivered.

Flowers and foliage are more used than ever. Though perfect confidence in one's hostess is necessary to make a table much ornamented with flowers and greens a delight to the sharer, for however much we may wish it we cannot forget the insect life among which plants unfold their loveliness; and a few little bugs on a slice of tongue, or an ant or two wandering aimlessly about spoil the appetite of even the most robust, and simply ruin the enjoyment of some delicate stomach. Neither too much care nor water can scarcely be used in their preparation.

Strong contrasts and rich combinations of tints are the fashion now for floral decoration. The single color has entirely given way to the blending of two or three harmonious colors. Pale pink and yellow roses, and brown foliage; yellow and crimson roses, yellow, white and terra cotta tinted chrysanthemums, all make lovely harmonies.

Still the single color gives most charming effects, and many a lady will adhere to the old way in spite of the edict of fashion. A pink dinner given to Nevada by the ladies of San Francisco was one long to be remembered for the artistic beauty of its decorations. The table was covered first with pale pink surah, this was covered with branches of blossoming almonds, which are great masses of delicate pink blooms without a leaf or bit of green among them. The name cards were tiny branches of blossoms tied with apple green ribbon upon which the name was done in old script lettering in gilt.

A violet dinner would only be possible to the millionaire or to one living on the Pacific coast where violets grow in as great profusion as our most common garden flower. At one given not long since the table was covered first with pale pink surah; over this were scattered "bushels" of the fragrant Parma violet until only now and then a glimpse of the pink could be seen.

Mosses and bunches of tissue paper were introduced under the surah to make as "billowy" an appearance as possible and prevent flatness.

Pink fairy lamps grouped in the center shed forth a softened light, which was augmented by the crystal candelabras at each end of the table. Garlands of maiden hair fern and violets were looped from the central chandelier to the candelabra, tied here and there with pale pink ribbons. Pink and violet candles were used, and the name-cards were tied with ribbons to match.

Gilded leaves and twigs of the eucalyptus and magnolia trees were the only decoration used at another dinner, where the center piece was of pale pink India silk. These commend themselves to the housewife of moderate means, as they may be done at home and used more than once.

The shops are full of strips, squares and lengths of Oriental silks, embroidered and plain, for the ornamentation of dinner tables, but great care must be used in selecting them as a definite scheme must always be carried out or the effect is horrible.

A very artistically arranged dinner table, in a room where the prevailing tone of the decoration was brown, leading up to gold as a key note, was something after the following fashion: In the center sat a large Benares bowl, filled with a handsome palm. A quaintly shaped candelabra stood at each end of the table. At the sides were alternate small vases and bowls of Benares ware; the vases were filled with pale yellow chrysanthemums and brown leaves, while deep terra cotta tinted ones filled the bowls. A long length of terra cotta India silk was stretched down the center of the table, bringing within its encircling folds one and another of the bowls and vases. The dessert was served in Kaga ware, bowls and plates and finger bowls of Benares ware were used. Pale terra cotta colored candle shades softened the light, and the *menus* and name cards were done on terra cotta cartridge paper.

At a recent dinner the dining room was "a dream in blue," the decoration being principally in that color. Streamers of pale blue tulle radiated in all directions from the chandelier to the walls, drooping till they nearly touched the heads of the party gathered to feast; numbers of white doves were helplessly enmeshed within the folds of the tulle, each one bearing about its neck a tiny wreath of forget-me-nots. The globes which shaded and softened the gaslight were blue tinted, of an exquisitely delicate pattern. Pale blue surah, edged with white lace covered the table, in the center of which was a blue basket into which were massed great bunches of yellow and white chrysanthemums, with beautiful variegated greenery.

A priceless bunch of orchids hung pendant from the chande-

lier, and long ropes of smilax were strung from the center of the crystal candelabras at the ends of the table. Blue baskets filled with snowberries and fine grasses were scattered about the table. At each plate stood a tiny crystal vase, holding a single orchid of the pitcher-plant variety.

Another decoration which is old, but which will never quite be obsolete on account of its significance, is the rose-bell for the center. This emphasizes most delicately the fact that everything must be *sub rosa*, for are not the feasters literally "under the rose!"

It is the aim of each woman in society to make her dinners the most novel and entertaining of any in her set. The one who grasped the idea of a progressive dinner, and successfully carried it out, is worthy of great praise for they have been wonderfully attractive.

The principle of the dinner was illustrated by three bands of silk lettered in gold and bronze with the word "Progressive;" these diverged from a beautiful collection of cherry blossoms that were massed in the center of the table. Cherry colored surah covered the table in undulating folds and served as an admirable background for the delicate cherry blossoms. Instead of bouquets or boutonnières, a crescent of maiden hair fern and madrone berries was set at each corner, and added materially to the attractiveness of the table.

The name-cards were sprays of cherry leaves; upon the polished surface of one was inscribed the guests name and the date in golden letters. Cords and tassels of white and green green silk were attached to the sprays, and the whole made a lovely little souvenir.

There were eight ladies present and a like number of gentlemen, and eight courses were prepared for their delectation.

After the soup had been served and just before the serving of the next course, the host gave a signal and rose from his seat as did all the gentlemen, the ladies remaining seated, each gentleman then moved to the next gentleman's seat to the right.

Prior to the commencement of the next course, the host gave his signal again and each gentleman again moved to the right.

The entire setting of the courses was so harmoniously arranged that at the close of the dinner each gentleman had visited for a short space every lady at the table and had at last returned to the one whom he had taken into dinner.

A wandering paragraph tells us of a New York lady who has made herself quite popular and gained quite a reputation for originality by substituting fanciful daggers and miniature swords enriched with jewels and art work, for the conventional knife and fork. For instance, roses of tinted enamel with the end of the stems provided with two convenient thorns of gold to be used as a fork, the rose being the handle.

This lady argues that ordinary knives and forks were intended for the days gone by when the dinner parties of society ladies included haunches of venison and mutton served in high slices to the guests and requiring substantial instruments for the subdivision of the slices into morsels suitable for the mouth.

"Those were days of gross hospitality, and the table necessities were in keeping," observes the anti-knife and fork hostess. "I am not quite sure the Chinese do not show exquisite taste in their use of chop-sticks."

A novelty introduced from England, is the new "bread server." These articles are useful and maybe artistic as well. The "bread server" is a three pronged fork with an ornamental bar across the top which enables one to hand a piece of cut bread without lifting the heavy platter.

By the way, it is difficult to realize what a modern invention the table fork is. We read that Queen Elizabeth never heard of one. She had it is true a few dainty forks, perchance with crystal handles, for eating preserved fruits at dessert—the Chinese serve their preserved fruits with tiny two pronged forks now. But long after Elizabeth ruled England dinner forks were unknown in that "tight little island."

The very earliest now to be found belong to the same nobleman whose hour-glass salt has been spoken of, and these are not older than the middle of the reign of Charles II. The few early forks of the reign of George I are three pronged, and very few four pronged forks were made before the reign of George III, from which time their fashion has remained unaltered to the present day except for their handles which have followed the fashion of spoons finishing up with the familiar "fiddle pattern" of the nineteenth century use.

Before the days of forks, the ewer and basin, which have generally disappeared, were much in request after every course; whereas now, the basin or bowl alone with a little scented water makes its appearance after dinner, more as a matter of fashion than necessity. Four out of five of the old basins have no doubt been melted up to supply the very forks whose invention rendered the washing of the fingers superfluous.

A lady who has visited a good deal in the South tells of one grand old home where the basin and ewer, with a fine napkin, were brought around to the guests in rotation after the dinner in place of the more modern finger-bowls. It was rather novel to watch the dignity of the pompous old butler as he poured

## THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

just enough water over the dainty fingers and dextrously brought forward the napkin to dry them.

To bring forward this old fashion would indeed be a novelty which doubtless some enterprising dinner giver will soon do for the amusement and entertainment of her guests.

### DECORATIVE WROUGHT IRON.

By JAMES CARRUTHERS.

**W**ITHIN the past few years artistic iron work for the decoration of dwellings and business and public structures has come so much in vogue that there are few of these of any architectural pretension in which it does not appear. Architects usually draw the leading lines of the designs, leaving the details to be filled in by the architectural forms. The great object of designers of artistic structural work in this line is to impart grace and vigor without complexity; in minor enrichments their aim is to combine elegance and simplicity. In large designs, such as entrance gates, these are composed of a number of pieces; at the points of junction they are welded at a white heat, certain of them being connected by fused copper and tin, the heavier bar scroll work being fused and riveted previously to being mounted. Attached ornaments, such as bosses, or leaves and flowers, are sometimes stamped and chiseled.

The precision with which forms are beaten up by the hammer, and by which the smith locates and apportions the weight of

life and energy into the dull masses of metal. It is curious to note the historic phases of this description of work. The examples of the thirteenth century show a striving after extreme accuracy in the rendering of natural forms. In the fourteenth century the designs were less vigorous than in that which preceded it, extreme minuteness was aimed at in structural work with accompanying tendency to shallowness, but a marvelous ability was displayed in the details. In latter work there was seen a fullness and rotundity in the forms, an inner grace and a singular suppleness of execution. In the time of the Renaissance another new quality became apparent, that of picturesqueness. The later Gothic architecture with its crocheted canopies and elegant finials and splendid spirelets had its counterpart in the wrought iron covers of fonts that looked like buildings in model, and the richest ornamentation was repeated in reredos, grilles, railings, screens of altars and shrines. Decoration, in fact, may be said to have presently run riot. This extravagance was partially redeemed by an admirable scale and balance between the parts.

There is a vast repertory of designs of the past to be skillfully utilized in the way of suggestions as to treatment. The extreme elaboration of some former periods is not now required. There is a certain charm in a design having an air of richness realized by simple means. Our wrought iron manufacturers are achieving notable triumphs. Prominent in their larger work are gateways to private grounds, and churches, and the courts of business structures, reredos, screens and railings.

What can be accomplished in the way of lightsome elegance combined with strength, may be seen in wrought iron grilles, used as panels to fill in mural apertures, and in window guards. The former admit of a high degree of delicacy and richness of ornamentation. In one of these, the design of which is before us, the pattern of interlacing work threads itself through and through in a sort of runic knot and then goes off into graceful scrolls and curves, terminating in leaves and spiral ornamentation. In grilles the ornament, which is kept separate from the borders, should appear to be evolved from the main lines of the design, whether consisting of tapering and swelling branches, interlacements or curling leaf forms. Wrought iron wall candle brackets, the branches springing from a plate of heraldic character, or from scroll devices and strap work, or with curved and leaf borders pleasantly diversify the wall space of a room. Another grille before us consists of horizontal and vertical bands, the one set overlying the other and tied together at their angles by simulated knotted pieces of rope. The Renaissance style of building has favored the adoption of wrought iron hinges on exterior doors, somewhat analogous to those of Mediæval times, as in the introduction of a horizontal strap from which spring scrolls terminating in foliage or other ornament. In keeping with the original ideas of such hinges, as means of strength, massive nail heads will sometimes be inserted in the wood work. Another mediæval practice that has been introduced is the attaching beneath cornices, or in center of gables, or at angles formed by leading structural lines, such figures as stems or twisted bars springing from some central ornament and terminating in fine spirals or conventionalized flowers. They serve to diversify the plain spaces and to emphasise in a picturesque manner certain structural portions of a building. Numerous pinnacles, crestings and balcony fronts exemplify the resources of wrought iron work.

Polychromatic coloring might advantageously be applied more extensively to exterior wrought iron work as in grilles, balconies and gates, color being a contribution to the beauty of form and this without disguising the real character of the work the hand manipulation of which cannot be hid. Color also aids in imparting an expressional clearness to a highly elaborate design, and to emphasise points of radiation.

It is in the finer work executed for interiors that we meet with the elaborate ornamentation which the material is capable of displaying. The distinctive character of the work and the modification of design to material; further, the peculiar dead black of the surface with the intrinsic value arising from the ingenuity and beauty of manipulation, cause it to be sought after for its unique effect among rich furnishings. The articles for rooms have ordinarily a purpose of utility. We meet with small tables having elaborate arabesque borders beneath the onyx tops; flower and leaf designs sportively arranged as the borders of screens, plant and flower vase stands, chains and intertwined tendrils as chandelier supports, the former having frequently crystalline shaped ornaments in the metal alternating with links, their octagonal, rhomboidal or other shaped surfaces presenting ever-changing effects from artificial light. Such chains are attractive also by their extreme variation of contours and lightness. The fire irons and other appurtenances of the mediæval hearth are in constant demand. They derive interest not only from historic association and their quaintness but from structural ingenuity of form, and the skill displayed in the spiral convolutions of rounded strands in spindle form, or shaped like the whorl of shells, and other devices all marked by simplicity and adaptation to material. Chests with wrought iron ornamentation to



CARVED WALNUT BED.—French Work of the XVI Century in the Cluny Museum.

his blows, causing the atoms of the heated metal to advance for convex and recede for concave forms is the chief marvel of the art. Not only does the greater strength of wrought iron, as compared with cast work, allow of the employment of less material, thus assuring an aspect of superior lightness of the design, but is characterized by a freedom of execution peculiarly its own. In the repetition of details in a design no two are so exactly the same as to lose a certain sort of individuality. Thus unity of design never sinks into uniformity of execution. Much of the ancient ornamental iron work still extant extends our admiration from the designer to the fabricator, who with stalwart arms, anvil and hammer, encountered successive exigencies of manipulation only to triumph over them, whether welding with a white heat at the forge, or making with his hammer all kinds of hollows and reliefs, and in the exercise of the freedom pertaining to the art in the rendering of the designs, throwing